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7 June 1961

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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UAR-USSR: The UAR is now conducting an intensive propaganda campaign in retaliation for recent Soviet criticism of the UAR's suppression and alleged mistreatment of local Communists. At a press conference in Damascus on 5 June, Riyad al-Turk--one of the Communists Moscow claimed had died by torture--attested to his "good treatment" in prison, treatment which the Cairo press commented was better than that received by "inmates of Siberia." The UAR official newspaper Al Jumhuriyah on 6 June stated that Moscow's propaganda is putting the USSR in the "imperialist camp" and added that if Soviet leaders believe they can impose their views on the UAR through the USSR-UAR trade agreements, "they feed on delusions."

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Sudan: Pressure against the Abboud government is likely to be severe during the next few weeks. Siddiq al-Mahdi, head of the powerful Ansar religious sect and leader of the civilian group which has been agitating against the military regime, has sent a new note to General Abboud protesting a recent police action against two members of the Mahdi family. In the note, which was apparently intended for wide circulation, the Ansar leader accused the military government of religious persecution, and reiterated his demand for a return to civilian government.

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[Siddiq al-Mahdi has also reportedly brought into Khartoum approximately 1,000 of his Ansar followers, in order to resist any government harrassment] The opposition group may be planning a civil disobedience campaign in conjunction with a strike planned by the Sudan Railway Workers Union for 16 June.

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Communist China - Nepal: Peiping is seeking to capitalize on King Mahendra's suspicion of India and his growing political and economic difficulties. Communist China's chief of state, Liu Shao-chi, has reportedly sent a confidential letter to the King endorsing his regime and calling for speedy utilization of the \$30,000,000 in Chinese aid already committed to Nepal under

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[previous agreements. Peiping is also pressing for permission to start construction of a road in Nepal which would link up with a Chinese road in Tibet. A Chinese economic delegation now in Katmandu has reportedly met with the King to discuss the Chinese aid program. Although the King is likely to be receptive to offers of additional assistance from non-Indian sources, he will probably try to maintain a balance in his relations with India and Communist China.]

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UAR-Soviet Propaganda Exchanges

Some UAR commentators have speculated that the USSR chose this time to attack the UAR because of Nasir's leading role in the current "nonalignment" conference in Cairo. Al Jumhuriyah, asserting that Nasir long ago made it clear that the UAR was nonaligned despite the acceptance of Soviet aid, states that the Soviet propaganda campaign "provides us with an opportunity to demonstrate our adherence to positive neutrality and nonalignment." Despite the exchange of polemics, there is no evidence that economic and military collaboration has declined.

The UAR's Middle East News agency suggests that the USSR has never accepted the Egyptian-Syrian union of 1958, "at which time the USSR's major tool in the area--the Syrian Communist party--lost its power to work in the Arab field." Khalid Bakdash, Syrian Communist leader, fled to the bloc at the time of the union and has subsequently published anti-UAR articles in international Communist journals.

Nasir--who exchanged recriminations with Khrushchev over the activities of Arab Communists in early 1959--undoubtedly ordered the anti-Soviet attacks. Thus far, the current dispute has been restricted to propaganda by both sides and two UAR official requests that the USSR "correct" its broadcasts. The first request was made to the Soviet ambassador in Cairo on 22 May; the second was presented to the director of Moscow radio's Arabic service by the UAR press attaché on 5 June.

The USSR's latest statements on the dispute were made on 2 June. Moscow radio broadcast a protest made to the UAR by the USSR's Central Council of Trade Unions, again alleging UAR mistreatment of Communist prisoners. On the same date Moscow announced the sending of a similar cable to Nasir by "more than 1,200 students" from 65 countries who are studying in the USSR, including students from several Arab states. [redacted]

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Sudan

The opposition group is essentially a coalition of a variety of political and religious elements with disparate interests. It apparently lacks organized support within the army. Its chief goal is to bring about the downfall of the military regime and return the civilian politicians to power. It does not appear to have any definite plans for overthrowing the military regime, but apparently hopes to force concessions by staging a series of civil disturbances. In the past the group has lacked a concrete issue with which to arouse public support for such a move, but Siddiq al-Mahdi may attempt to exploit the religious issue in an effort to rally the Ansar tribesmen.

According to reports reaching the American Embassy in Khartoum, the leaders of the opposition, who have become convinced that British and American policy is now aimed at supporting the Abboud government, are exploring the possibilities of obtaining UAR support. The opposition leaders are said to have offered to conduct a foreign policy satisfactory to the UAR in return for UAR support.

This new maneuvering comes at a time when the Abboud government is facing a possible crisis in the labor field. The Sudan Railway Workers Union (SRWU), the largest trade union in the Sudan, is reliably reported to be planning a strike for 15 June. There is no evidence that the opposition was active in planning the strike, but it is encouraging the union and is obviously hoping to turn the strike to political advantage.

The opposition's plans for civil disturbances will undoubtedly be hampered by the government's ban on all public gatherings because of an outbreak of meningitis which has reached epidemic proportions. [redacted]

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